



HEALTH AFFAIRS

THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

WASHINGTON, D. C. 20301-1200

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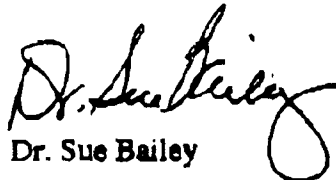
MEMORANDUM FOR SURGEON GENERAL OF THE ARMY
SURGEON GENERAL OF THE NAVY
SURGEON GENERAL OF THE AIR FORCE

SUBJECT: DoD Pharmacy Year 2000 (Y2K) Transition Policy

On May 17, 1999 the White House Council on Y2K Conversion sponsored a roundtable discussion on "National Pharmaceutical Supply Chain Year 2000 Initiative." The attendees of the Roundtable represented virtually every aspect of the pharmaceutical manufacturing and supply system. The industry's message to its customers and the American public was that the industry feels very comfortable that they are ready to make the transition to the new millennium and that their patients will continue to be able to obtain all of the medications needed after December 31, 1999. This confidence is based on the known readiness of the information technology systems of the companies involved, the current inventory of various pharmaceuticals available, and the robust, redundant design of our pharmaceutical system which has already demonstrated the ability to rapidly respond to any emergency that might develop.

Although substantial drug inventory exists in the system, the greatest risk for system disruption during the millennium transition is posed by the "end users" accumulating unusual quantities of prescription drugs and thus creating artificial shortages. The industry is looking for ways to be alerted by and responding to those pharmaceutical orders so that this situation does not occur. It is important that our providers, pharmacists, and administrators know that the key to making a smooth transition through Y2K for pharmacy depends on each MTF and individual maintaining responsible and "normal" prescribing patterns. Our providers and pharmacists should, therefore, provide consistent reassurance to our beneficiaries that their prescription drugs will remain available through the Y2K transition, and encourage them to refill their prescriptions on schedule, 5-7 days before their medication runs out.

My point of contact for this issue is LtCol Steven Humburg, MC, FS, (703) 681-1703 x5210, or Steven.Humburg@ha.osd.mil.


Dr. Sue Bailey

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Health Affairs

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